

## **IN THE CLAIMS**

**1. (previously presented)** A story branching control method for a video game whose content of a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point selectable by a user for determining a flow of the story;

receiving a search instructing input for searching for the branching point;

searching for the branching point for a predetermined period of time after receiving the search instructing input;

determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after receiving the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time.

**2. (previously presented)** The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined variant value for use in the determination of the branch destination in accordance with the result of the determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period.

**3. (previously presented)** The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

incrementing a number after the determining step; and  
setting a value of the incremented number as the predetermined variant value.

**4. (original)** The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined variant value.

**5. (previously presented)** The story branching control method according to claim 4, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the variant value set by an initial value of a predetermined variant or by in accordance with the result of the determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period, when the branching point to have been reached is detected by the flow of story within a period excluding the predetermined period of time.

**6. (previously presented)** The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined flag in accordance with the result of the determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period.

**7. (original)** The story branching control method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined flag.

**8. (original)** The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating a predetermined search notification signal for notifying the search being made, simply within the predetermined period of time from the search instructing input.

**9. (original)** . The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating, when the branching point to have been passed is detected by the flow of information within a period excluding the predetermined period of time, a predetermined pass notification signal for notifying the branching point to have been passed.

**10. (original)** The story branching control method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on the way of the flow of story.

**11. (currently amended)** A story branching control method for a video game whose content of a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising the steps of:

providing a current branching point selectable by the player for determining in a flow of the story;

receiving a search instructing input of the player for searching for the current branching point;

determining whether the current branching point exists after receiving the search instruction input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a predetermined variant value, when having reached the branching point by the flow of the story wherein the predetermined variant value is determined as a function of a prior success or failure in determining whether a previous branching point existed after receiving a previous search instruction input.

**12. (currently amended)** A notification signal generating method for a video game whose content of a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point searchable by the player for determining in a flow of the story; and

generating, when having passed the branching point by the flow of the story without having received a search instructing input of the player, a predetermined pass notification signal notifying the branching point to have been passed.

**13. (previously presented)** The notification signal generating method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on a way of the flow of the story.

**14. (previously presented)** A program executing apparatus for executing processing program whose content of a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising:

search instructing input detecting means for detecting an input of a search instructing input by the player;

searching means for searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

branch point determining means for determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting the search instructing input; and

branch destination determining means for determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of the branch point determining means in determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time.

**15. (previously presented)** A recording medium having recorded therein a processing program whose content of a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, the processing program comprising and making a computer execute the steps of:

detecting an input of a search instructing input by the player;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time.

**16. (previously presented)** A computer with a memory storing a processing program whose content of the a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, the processing program comprising and making the computer execute the steps of:

detecting an input of a search instructing input by the player;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time.